IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-18   (canceled)

19.   (currently amended) For use with a packet transport system associated with a switching network and having a master device and a slave device that transmits packets therebetween over a local interface, a messaging system for facilitating communications between said master device and said slave device, comprising:

an aggregate level detector that determines storage levels of a plurality of channels associated with said slave device, said slave device providing a network interface to said switching network for said master device; and

a periodic message generator that periodically issues to said master device over said local interface a periodic message indicating said storage levels and enabling said master device to determine a variation between a first clock associated with said slave device and a second clock associated with said master device.

20.   (previously presented) The messaging system as recited in Claim 19 wherein said periodic message is transmitted in band with packets transmitted from said slave device to said master device.

21.   (previously presented) The messaging system as recited in Claim 19 wherein packets transmitted to said master device are packets received by said slave device over said switching network.

22.   (previously presented) The messaging system as recited in Claim 19 wherein said switching network is an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) network.

23. (original) The messaging system as recited in Claim 19 wherein said periodic message is contained in a single packet.

Claim 24 (canceled)

25. (original) The messaging system as recited in Claim 19 wherein said master device transmits additional packets to said slave device based on said periodic message.

26. (currently amended) For use with a packet transport system associated with a switching network and having a master device and a slave device that transmits packets therebetween over a local interface, a method for facilitating communications between said master device and said slave device, comprising:

determining storage levels of a plurality of channels associated with said slave device, said slave device providing a network interface to said switching network for said master device; and

periodically issuing to said master device over said local interface a periodic message indicating said storage levels and enabling said master device to determine a variation between a first clock associated with said slave device and a second clock associated with said master device.

27. (previously presented) The method as recited in Claim 26 wherein said periodically issuing comprises transmitting said periodic message in band with packets transmitted from said slave device to said master device.

28. (previously presented) The method as recited in Claim 26 wherein packets transmitted to said master device are packets received by said slave device over said switching network.

29. (previously presented) The method as recited in Claim 26 wherein said switching network is an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) network.

30.   (original) The method as recited in Claim 26 wherein said periodic message is contained in a single packet.

Claim 31   (canceled)

32.   (original) The method as recited in Claim 26 wherein said master device transmits additional packets to said slave device based on said periodic message.

33.   (previously presented) For use with a packet transport system associated with a switching network and having a master device and a slave device that transmits packets therebetween over a local interface, a messaging system for facilitating communications between said master device and said slave device, comprising:

an event driven messaging subsystem, including:

a channel level detector that reads a level of a first-in, first-out (FIFO) buffer of said slave device and compares said level to a threshold, said slave device providing a network interface to said switching network for said master device, and

an event driven message generator that issues an event driven message to said master device when said level reaches said threshold; and

a periodic messaging subsystem, including:

an aggregate level detector that determines storage levels of a plurality of channels associated with said slave device, and

a periodic message generator that periodically issues to said master device over said local interface a periodic message indicating said storage levels, said master device controlling transmission of packets to said slave device based on at least one of said event driven message and said periodic message.

34.   (previously presented) The messaging system as recited in Claim 33 wherein at least one of said event driven message and said periodic message is transmitted in band with packets transmitted from said slave device to said master device.

35.   (previously presented) The messaging system as recited in Claim 33 wherein packets transmitted to said master device are packets received by said slave device over said switching network.

36.   (previously presented) The messaging system as recited in Claim 33 wherein said switching network is an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) network.

37.   (original) The messaging system as recited in Claim 33 wherein said master device transmits additional packets to said slave device based on at least one of said event driven message and said periodic message.

38.   (original) The messaging system as recited in Claim 33 wherein said master device suspends transmission of packets to said slave device based on at least one of said event driven message and said periodic message.

39.   (original) The messaging system as recited in Claim 33 wherein said periodic message is contained in a single packet.

40.   (original) The messaging system as recited in Claim 33 wherein said periodic message enables said master device to determine a variation between a first clock associated with said slave device and a second clock associated with said master device.

41.   (previously presented) For use with a packet transport system associated with a switching network and having a master device and a slave device that transmits packets therebetween

over a local interface, a method for facilitating communications between said master device and said slave device, comprising:

generating an event driven message, including:

reading a level of a first-in, first-out (FIFO) buffer associated with a channel of said slave device, said slave device providing a network interface to said switching network for said master device,

comparing said level to a threshold, and

issuing an event driven message to said master device when said level reaches said threshold; and

alternatively generating a periodic message, including:

determining storage levels of a plurality of channels associated with said slave device, and

periodically issuing to said master device a periodic message over said local interface indicating said storage levels, said master device controlling transmission of packets to said slave device based on at least one of said event driven message and said periodic message.

42.   (previously presented) The method as recited in Claim 41 wherein said issuing comprises transmitting said event driven message in band with packets transmitted from said slave device to said master device.

43.   (previously presented) The method as recited in Claim 41 wherein said periodically issuing comprises transmitting said periodic message in band with packets transmitted from said slave device to said master device.

44.   (previously presented) The method as recited in Claim 41 wherein said packets transmitted to said master device are packets received by said slave device over said switching network.

45.   (original) The method as recited in Claim 41 wherein said periodically issuing comprises transmitting said periodic message out of band.

46.   (previously presented) The method as recited in Claim 41 wherein said switching network is an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) network.

47.   (original) The method as recited in Claim 41 wherein said master device transmits additional packets to said slave device based on at least one of said event driven message and said periodic message.

48.   (original) The method as recited in Claim 41 wherein master device suspends transmission of packets to said slave device based on at least one of said event driven message and said periodic message.

49.   (original) The method as recited in Claim 41 wherein said periodic message is contained in a single packet.

50.   (original) The method as recited in Claim 41 wherein said periodic message enables said master device to determine a variation between a first clock associated with said slave device and a second clock associated with said master device.